

1254 c3
A
R E V I E W

O F T H E

PRINCIPLES and CONDUCT

O F T H E

MEMBERSHIP
S E C E D E R S.

W I T H

REASONS of the AUTHOR'S SEPARATION
from the BURGHERS in particular.

By ALEXANDER PIRIE.

EDINBURGH:

Printed for W. GRAY, Front of the Exchange.

MDCCLXIX.



ADVERTISEMENT.

The following sheets appear in vindication of truth, and of personal character. The Author hopes, that his late unhappy connections will furnish an apology for this publication, to every candid reader. In relating facts, he has wrote nothing, but what can be attested by unexceptionable witnesses; and in delineating principles, he has examined the standard-writings of the Seceders, where alone their genuine sentiments can be found.



46
5- 5-
121

A R E V I E W, &c.

AS I have left the Secession, a body with which I have been so long connected; I reckon it necessary to give a short account of the reasons which have determined this alteration of conduct, that all concerned may have access to judge in this matter with impartiality.

1st, I am dissatisfied with the foot upon which that body stands. The Christian church stands "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, &c." or on that divine plan displayed in the New Testament, the time of which is called "the time of reformation," Heb. ix, 10. "Another foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid" in the writings of these holy men of God. But the Seceders never directly pretend to have built on that foundation; but avow, that they have sat down on the second period of reformation between the years 1638 and 1650; and particularly they build on the principles of the protesters*, who protested against the admission of non-covenanters into places of civil and military trust. This plan is of mere human device, conceived and executed by fallible men; and so is not upon the foot of the Christian church, which knows no plan of reformation but God's, and knows no foundation but that which he has "laid in Zion." How shocking, then, is it to send us to the acts of parliaments, and human histories, to find our principles, while Christians have no principles but those "of the oracles of God!" We dare not receive divine truth, because authorised by acts of parliament and fallible fathers, but because "it is in truth the word of God." A church standing upon an human foot must be an human church.—Besides, the Christian church is a corporation erected upon Christ's *royal patent*, or *new covenant*, "which is from above, and is the mother of us all." This covenant, sealed in the blood of Christ, is the common tie or bond of that whole society; whereby they become *fellow-citizens, fellow-heirs, and of the same body*, having one Lord, one faith, common laws, privileges, and hopes. But the Seceders are erected on, and bear witness to human covenants, which God never made, nor ever mentioned in that book, "which is able to make us wise unto salvation." This is the common tie of the society. They are bound together by a profession

* Act and Testimony, &c. p. 23, 25, *et passim*.

of adherence to these covenants; or by swearing faith in them; whereby they become "a people separated from all people;" and call themselves witnesses, not for the new covenant, but for "our national covenants." Now, a society erected upon a charter or covenant formed and authorised by kings, parliaments, committees of estates, &c. must be a human or earthly society, as the Christian church knows no king but Jesus; and no charter, but the covenant in his blood: although it is very proper that our civil head should give his subjects a legal security for the free exercise of their religious liberties. If we pursue the above principles into their necessary consequences, they lead us into the territories of the *man of sin*, yea they will bring us "even to his seat." This will be evident from the following series.

1st. According to them, religion is to be established by civil authority, and supported by the influence of civil rewards and punishments*: That is, after the clergy are secured in their benefices, by adopting the national system of religion, they are to be judges of the heretical character, and the king is to be their blind executioner to destroy all whom the clergy please to call heretics; yea, all who presume to worship God according to their own conscience, if it be not according to the clerical dictates. This is Antichrist, or the *Revelation-beast*. That beast described by John is plainly nothing else but clergy-authority, supported by the power of the kings of the earth, who must bring to condign punishment even their most loyal subjects, if the clergy please to call them heretics. This power may well be called *the beast*, because it deprives all under its influence of the exercise of their reason; — the king and clergy, by making them wolves; and the people, by obliging them to give up their understandings and consciences to others, which are the property of God alone. This is directly opposite to Christ. His kingdom is not of this world, and so cannot be established by human might or power, but by his Spirit alone. To establish truth, must be to establish it in the understandings and consciences of men, which all the laws and swords in the world cannot effect. Swords and consciences are very distinct things; and it is not easy to see how wealth, honours, and ease in this world, or swords and gibbets, can convince men of the truth, or establish it in their minds. Paul desires us to pray for kings, not that they may give their power to the church, or commit fornication with her; not that they may establish her by a *royal patent*, or interpose their authority in matters of re-

* Act and Testimony, &c. p. 22. 23. with the acts of parliament there referred to.

ligion and conscience; but "that we may live a peaceable and quiet life under them, in all godliness and honesty." There is no direction given in all the New Testament to kings and civil rulers once to meddle with the understandings and consciences of men. Moral actions fall under the cognisance of human legislators; but who bade them dictate to me in matters of faith, or punish me for conscience and opinion's sake? Christians as such know no authority but Christ's, and no motives to influence them either to embrace or continue in his word, but such as he has presented in that short emphatic verse,—“He that believes, shall be saved; and he that believes not, shall be damned.” To be influenced, then, in religion, by the hope of earthly rewards, or the fear of temporal punishments, is not to be influenced by the gospel; whose rewards and punishments lie chiefly beyond the grave, and contain all that is amiable and all that is dreadful in eternity.—No king but Jesus has authority in or over the church, nor can his religion be supported by political sanctions.

2dly, They have a false idea of the means of gospel-reformation. By reformation they mean a national uniformity of opinion in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; to promote which we are to rise in arms against all that will not swear to that uniformity, and endeavour to extirpate them by imprisonment, banishment, confiscation of goods, and death*. This reformation or national uniformity is not once mentioned in the New Testament, and indeed is absolutely impracticable. No earthly nation ever was or will be a nation of Christ's disciples; and although a whole nation could put on the national uniformity, it avails them nothing, while the heart is not right with God. Gospel-reformation is a belief of the truth and the sanctification of the Spirit, in which no nation ever will be uniform, but the heavenly nation. This never can be promoted by arms, oaths, prisons, gibbets, and other engines of persecution, but by God's Spirit in the truth of the gospel. These were the only means of reformation known to the apostles. They went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word: and they considered the churches as reformed when the word came, not to them in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost. How dreadful then is it to pray for the revival of a reformation which God never promised, to be promoted by means which he never appointed?

3dly, They assert, that God has chosen the three nations, Scotland, England, and Ireland, in the room of the Jewish

*Act and Testimony, &c. p. 20. 21. 22. &c. Solemn League, art. 2. 4. nation,

nation, and has separated them from all people by a covenant of peculiarity analogous to the Sinai covenant, and supported by the same national rewards and punishments. This is a most gross heresy, everfive of the whole gospel; which assures us, that God has chosen no earthly nation now for his inheritance: he has only chosen a number out of all nations for his name-sake; which number is called *the holy nation, the peculiar people, &c.* The covenant he has made with these, is not according to the covenant which he made with Israel when he brought them out from the land of Egypt, (Heb. viii. 9.), but is a new covenant, founded on better promises than the first; and is not fenced by national rewards and punishments, but by those which are eternal. The first was "the law of a carnal commandment," but the second has "the power of an endless life." This is the covenant which separates the people of God in all nations from all people. Can any thing, then, be more wild than to say that God made another covenant 1500 years after the new covenant was ratified in the blood of his Son; and has thereby incorporated three earthly nations into a society distinct from all others? This new covenant, including all that shall be saved, God has revealed; but he no where says in all his book, that he would make a covenant with three kingdoms.

4thly, Agreeable to the notion of an earthly-religious kingdom, they affirm, that none can be legally king of the three nations; but one who has sworn to promote the above uniformity by the means already mentioned. This is evidently contrary to the gospel; which never desired any king to persecute his subjects for conscience sake, nor ever made it a qualification of a king to swear the solemn league. The gospel says, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers;" but no where says, that their religion entitles them to our obedience. So long as our rulers permit us to live a *peaceable and quiet life, &c.* so long they have a title to our loyalty. Though the Seceders bear witness * to an act of parliament (1649) confirming our obedience to "a covenanted king," I must bear witness against it, as subversive of the acts of the King of Zion. A ferocious belief of the propriety of the above act, influenced by the assertions of the clergy, who call our revolution-kings "monsters with two heads," must necessarily inspire sentiments of disaffection to our present Sovereign, which may sooner or later display themselves in circumstances more favourable to their intentions. This I speak from dire experience. In my thoughtless years, my spiritual guides artfully enflamed me with rage against our then King, because he was

* Act and Testimony, &c. p. 22. 23. 57. 58.

not a covenanter; and all the Seceders I then knew were affected with the same distemper.

5thly, They affirm, also, that religion ought to be made a step to state-preferments, and that none but covenanters have a right to fight for their lives and liberties, or to fill up places of civil or military trust. This is clear from their adherence to the *act for purging the army*, &c. passed in the year 1649 *. This opposes the gospel, which by no means divests men of their natural rights. The law of nature obliges every man to use all lawful endeavours to save his own life and the liberty of his country, whether he be Heathen or Christian. How ridiculous then is it to bear witness to an act divesting mankind of their natural and gospel rights! Possessed of this opinion, can we condemn the English law, which obliges every candidate for state-preferments to take the sacrament of the supper previous to his exaltation?—Both methods are equally contrary to nature and the gospel, and condemning the one we cannot justify the other. Besides, the above opinion goes upon a false supposition,—that a profession of Christianity entitles us to the powers, revenues, and dignities of this world, in order that we may be in case to make the thunder of our power break upon the heads of them, who think differently from us. Now, in what part of Christ's legacy these privileges are left us, I profess I know not. When I read the New Testament, I find Christians entitled to all the powers, and dignities, and durable rights of the next world; but I find nothing left us of this, but the *cross, persecutions, and tribulations*, together with food and raiment, so far as God sees meet. Christ never came to dispose of civil offices: his disciples must be content to be "poor in this world, and rich in faith, &c."

6thly, They declaim against the toleration given at the revolution to every man to profess his religious opinions, and to worship God according to conscience †. This is the greatest of all civil blessings, and the only state-bulwark which religion needs. Accordingly Paul bids us only ask that God may put it into the hearts of kings to give us a toleration to "live a peaceable and quiet life under them in all godliness and honesty." To testify against this toleration, is to testify against Jesus.—A testimony equally *horrid and ridiculous*. Horrid, because if the government give not a toleration of this kind, then men must be forced by civil pains to profess a religion which they do not believe, and to worship God in a way they are persuaded is sinful. There is no medium; either the civil powers must allow us to enjoy our own religion, or they must

* Act and Testimony, &c. p. 22. † 16. p. 58.

impose a religion upon us whether we will or not; or, in other words, they must make us worse than we were before, by obliging us to be hypocrites.—It is *ridiculous*, since the Seceders themselves live under the protecting wings, and enjoy the sweets of the toleration, as well as others. It is wicked, to snarl at the very hand which feeds them, and to deny others the same liberty to differ from the church established, which they take to themselves. Has God given them a right to liberty, and devoted all the rest of mankind to religious slavery!—But, say they, it opens a door to heresy. So far from it, that it allows us to reclaim heretics by all the means appointed in the New Testament, by persuasion, reasoning, and exhortation. If these fail, after church-censures are applied, we are to leave them to the judgment of God, and not to deliver them to the magistrate, or hurt them in their civil interests. Persecution never will purge a man of heresy. Can confiscations of goods, racks, gibbets, dungeons, or prisons, ever cleanse a soul, or convince a man of his error? They may send him the sooner to damnation, but cannot enlighten the conscience.

7thly, They testify against the union between the two kingdoms of Scotland and England: as if it had been a sin for two nations, joined by nature in one island, to join in a commercial league of friendship, and to drop the sword of war, which had so long ravaged both nations, and sacrificed such multitudes of their inhabitants to their mutual resentment*. But what has this union to do with religion? Cannot the people in either nation be as religious as before? Yea, have they not a better opportunity of religious improvement than ever, since they have sheathed the sword in its scabbard, and live at peace with one another? If we judge Episcopacy in England an heresy; we have better access to reclaim the heretics than ever, since the union gives us liberty to enter England, and to use every gospel-method to promote the knowledge of the truth; which liberty we could not have enjoyed amidst the fury of war. And although Episcopacy is established in England, truth is stronger than human establishments: let us preach truth, and down falls *Diana*, though supported by all the pillars of state.—But can any thing be more wild than to censure our rulers, because they would not murder almost the whole English nation, merely for refusing to submit to the Presbyterian government? Who gave the Scots a right to judge or chuse a religion for themselves, and denied it to the English? Can civil authority force a conscience, which is subject to God alone? So long as a man is a friend to the civil go-

* Act and Testimony, &c. p. 54—57.

vestment, so long he has a right to its common protection; and no king has a right to chuse a religion for any but himself.

Last of all, *they consider the oath of abjuration as unlawful †: as if it were criminal to abjure the race of *Stuart*, and to swear allegiance to *the powers that are*. Arguing upon the antiquated ideas of *hereditary right*, they suppose, that would the Stuarts renounce the Popish faith and commence covenanters, they are heirs to our crown: not considering, that all power is originally in the people, and no man has any title to the throne, but he who is chosen by their consent.

Such are the principles of the Seceders,—principles purely political, relating to kings, parliaments, statesmen, soldiers, arms, &c. but have no connection with the kingdom of Christ. If it be said, they do not act up to the spirit of these principles; the answer is obvious:—Some profess them, while they do not believe them; others are ignorant of them; and the many are restrained by the British constitution, which opposes their intolerating spirit.

I proceed now to consider a few of their tenets, more properly *religious*, which are very near akin to the foregoing principles; being equally *absurd, erroneous, and dangerous*, as will appear in the following instances.

1st. They always preach subjection to the authority of fallible men in matters of faith and Christian practice. They tell the people, that such and such doctrines and rules of government were composed and enacted by such and such divines convened in certain assemblies, and therefore we should believe them, and adhere to them all our days, because they were authorised by such assemblies and councils †. Bible-authority is rarely or never mentioned. This must ruin multitudes, as it leads to believe in men rather than in God; and expressly to disobey Christ, who says, “Call no man master on earth.” Now, allowing these doctrines and rules to be of divine institution, yet if we believe them as “the word of men,” or because they were authorised by fallible assemblies; and consider them as binding our consciences, because our fathers swore to them; then we are the disciples of men, because we receive truth upon their authority, and not “because it is in truth,” “the word of God,” or because “it comes from God only.” This is the leading error of the Papists, who not only believe lies, but even divine truth also on the foot of human authority: and it is vain to say that there is a difference between the authority of Popes and Protestants; for Popes have as good a title to do evil, or to assume authority in religion, as any Protestant what-

* Act and Testimony, &c. p. 59.

† lb. p. 127.—129.

soever. Divine authority admits of no rival. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and he will not give his glory to another.

2dly, They always teach, that human traditions are a ground for the faith and practice of Christians, and so are equally binding with the scriptures.—They teach, for instance, that all the acts of parliament and of the assembly between 1638 and 1650 are still binding.—That there was a national covenant made in the days of James VI. and a solemn league in the reign of Charles I. by which the consciences of Christians are bound to this day. Now, we know, that these acts and covenants had a being by human tradition only, and consequently our faith in the very existence of these things is merely human; as we cannot give a divine faith but to the divine testimony, or to the “record which God has given us of his Son.” As men we may read and believe these histories, according to the degree of moral evidence attesting the facts related: but as Christians we know them not; nor do we believe any history, doctrine, or rule but what God has given us in the sacred records of his kingdom. It is absurd, then, to preach, that we cannot be Christians, unless we give the faith of a Christian to a human testimony. This was the error of the Pharisees, who “made void the commands of God by their traditions, and worshipped God in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” This is the error of the Papists still.

3dly, They have doctrines calculated for every meridian. When in Scotland they preach the obligation both of the national covenant and of the solemn league; in England and Ireland they only teach the obligation of the solemn league; and in any other nation they teach the obligation of neither of them. Now, there is surely juggling here. Christ ordered his ambassadors to preach all things which he commanded them in all nations: how, then, can those be doctrines of the gospel, which are only fit to be taught in a very few countries? Christianity is calculated to be an universal religion: and accordingly he “calls all men every where to repent,” and “his voice is still to the sons of men.”

4thly, They affirm, that ministers have a power to compose bonds or covenants of their own invention, and that people are obliged to swear them by the authority of an act of a church-court *. This they both teach and practise. Now, this is to preach their own power, and not the authority of Jesus. It is to *sit in the temple of God*, planning and publishing new religious laws and ordinances, which belongs to God alone; yea, *exalting ourselves above God*, since he will not add to the go-

* Act of the Associate Presbytery for renewing our solemn covenants.
spel-

spel-system; but declares, that if any man add to it, he will add to him all the plagues written in that book.

5thly, They err in their views of God's plan in distributing rewards and punishments under the gospel. If we adhere, say they, to our national covenants, then God will bless us with all the temporal or national blessings promised to old Israel; but if we forsake them, he will send upon us all the temporal judgments threatened in the law of Moses, "to avenge the quarrel of his covenant *." In our late wars with France, &c. this doctrine was warmly inculcated, being happily adapted to increase the number of covenanters, by persuading the people, that if they became friends to the Secession-interest, they should escape the awful judgments just about to break on these lands; or, if they fell with the carnal generation, they should have their souls for a prey. Since the termination of the war, however, this doctrine, this time-serving tenet, has disappeared, as every thing but truth must. No such doctrine is in scripture. True, indeed, God said to Israel, if they observed his covenant made with them, he would bless them with the earthly Canaan and the fulness thereof; and if not, he would smite them with innumerable national plagues: but he never said so to any other nation even with regard to his own covenant, much less with regard to covenants which he never once spoke of. Matters are quite changed under the gospel, when he has made a covenant with no earthly nation under heaven. The Popish nations, which have broke his covenant, and turned Antichristian, riot in the greatest affluence of worldly enjoyments; while those who keep most close to the new covenant, are generally "poor in this world." God's covenant is founded on eternal sanctions; and worldly blessings are but so many appendages to the kingdom of God. The hopes and fears of the Christian are not in this world. His hope "reaches to that which is within the veil," and his fear shivers at the thought of "eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord."—No doubt national vices, pride, ambition, venality, perjury, luxury, &c. will naturally draw on a train of national calamities. But God inflicts these punishments, as moral governor of the world, and not as head of the new covenant.

6thly, They affirm, that there is a moral or eternal duty, viz. national covenanting, which Christ neither practised himself, nor enjoined upon others. This is an accusation against the Saviour. The scriptures assure us, that when he came, he taught us all things: and consequently every eternal rule in

* Morison's Attempt, &c. p. 60.—64. Solemn Warning *passim*.

the Old Testament, is taught and confirmed in the New, by the mouth of Jesus, the King and Prophet greater than Moses. How inconsistent, then, is it to assert, that Christ, in forming the plan of the gospel-church, totally omitted any ordinance or rule necessary to be observed by his disciples? This is to charge the gospel as an imperfect institution; and to say, that men may be wiser than Jesus.

7thly, They teach, again, that our ancestors in the last century had a divine right to chuse a religion for all posterity. Say they, our fathers swore to adhere to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of Scotland, and to extirpate Episcopacy and all sectaries by civil pains; and therefore we are perjured, if we do not adhere to the same religion, and promote the ends of it, uniformity and extirpation, because our fathers swore to it. Thus, according to the Seceders, they chose a religion for all posterity*. They forget, it seems, that our fathers first swore to adhere to Popery, and then to Episcopacy, and, last of all, to Presbytery. Now, *Query*, Which of all these oaths binds posterity? As the second and third oaths cannot disannul the first, we are surely bound to be Papists, if our fathers religious oaths can bind us. —This is to force us to embrace religion by human authority; whereas the Bible says, *Judge ye*. If we are convinced upon inquiry that any religion is of God, we are bound to believe it upon his authority, without regard to any man, whether fathers or brethren: and if we are convinced that any religion is false, we are bound to renounce it, although ten thousand fathers had sworn to it. If the matter of our fathers oath was good, as no doubt the doctrine, worship, &c. of the church of Christ is, then the matter, being of God, binds us, but not the oath. No authority can be added to God's.

8thly, It is their opinion, that the Westminster confession of faith, &c. is a standard of divine truth. Now, a standard means “a rule which is of undoubted authority, and is the “test of other things of the same kind.” Now, as there is no authority in religion but that of God, before we receive a book as from God, we must see it stamped with his authority. But I know no book which God ever recommended or authorised but the scriptures; nor in that book does he any where say, that men were to be assisted by him in framing another standard. A standard is perfect in its kind; but when saw we a perfect human writing? If any such be a standard, we may throw away our Bible, as we have still a perfect rule left us in

* Morison's Attempt, &c. p. 61, &c. authorised by the Rev. Mr Adam Gib.

fewer words.—The parliamentary laws are the only standard of policy to the whole kingdom of Great Britain. Is King Jesus's standard a less perfect rule to all his subjects? How fearful is it to set up an idol in the room of God, and to teach people to pay the same reverence to mens works which they owe to their Bible only! By this they expressly contradict the Westminster divines, who maintain, that "the holy scriptures" are the *only* rule of faith and obedience." Whence it is plain, that these great men never intended their confession to be a standard. They only considered it as an *help* to know the scriptures; and so only used that liberty which is common to all religious societies,—a liberty to declare our religious opinions. These divines, then, were quite in the right;—they gave out a confession of their faith, but they did not hinder others to use the same liberty, nor did they bind their confession upon the conscience of others. 'This was left to the parliament and general assembly about the middle of the last century, to force three nations to believe upon their authority, or to make a national uniformity of heads and thoughts. However deeply, then, we may blame those courts who attempted to be above God, let us no more accuse the Westminster assembly. Creeds and confessions are lawful things, while they are kept in their proper place, *i. e.* while they are considered as declarations of the religious opinions of a society, any article of which the society may change, so soon as they are convinced it is contrary to the word of God.

9thly, They sometimes affirm, that the commands of God given to the Israelitish nation were partly moral, partly ceremonial, and partly political; but when it serves the low designs of a party, they teach again that they were all moral, and so still binding on all people *. Yea, one of them lately preached, that since Jonah's mariners offered sacrifices and made vows, therefore all ages are bound to act in the same manner †. This is in express opposition to scripture. See Eph. ii. 16. Heb. x. 1. 8. and last verse.

10thly, Allied to the foregoing tenet is their doctrine concerning the Sinai covenant. That covenant, say they, is still binding on all Christians. Now, circumcision was the seal of that covenant, and the gate to it, by which every male was to enter in. But the apostle tells us, that if we observe but that one rite of the Sinai covenant, we "have fallen from grace," Gal. v. 2. 3. 4. "Behold I Paul say unto you, that if ye be "circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." How erro-

* Wylie's Short Dialogue, &c. p. 8.

† Morison's Attempt, &c. p. 8.

neous, then, is it to say that we must be under a covenant, which, Paul says, was "ready to vanish away?" Heb. viii. last. Christians "are not come to mount Sinai," but they "are come to Sion," where there is "a better covenant, founded on better promises."

11thly, They maintain, that the Sinai covenant was a covenant of works, of grace, and of duty. As to the covenant of duty,—no such covenant is mentioned in the book of God: it is a clergy-covenant. Besides, how absurd is this doctrine! Can any covenant be both a covenant of works and of grace; when Paul tells us, "if it be of grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace, &c?" Rom. xi. 6.

12thly, They err in asserting, that the word of God warrants us to swear to adhere to human systems as standards; whereas they cannot produce either precept or example from the whole scripture for such an opinion.

Besides the above gross and dangerous errors adopted by the whole Seceding body, there are several others espoused by the Burgher-presbytery of Perth in their libel against me.

1st, They assert, That justification to eternal life was the chief thing in the Sinai covenant or law of Moses. This is an [†] heresy, ever since of the scripture; which assures us, that there were crimes "from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts xiii. 39. Now, if it could not justify us from all sin, it could never justify us to eternal life. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and by him alone we are "justified from all things." Even the Old-testament believers were only justified to eternal life, by believing, not in the covenant ratified in "the blood of bulls and goats," but in the covenant to be confirmed in the blood of Christ; even that covenant of promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent."

2dly, That the moral law is binding on Christians, as in the Sinai covenant [†]. The import of this doctrine is, that we are bound to keep the seventh-day sabbath, and to honour our parents with a view to the inheritance of the earthly Canaan. This is the form of the 4th and 5th commandments in the Si-

* The Seceders expressly oppose the sentiments of the Rev. Mr Boston, who, in his sermon, entitled, *The everlasting sponsals, &c.* affirms,—“The Lord brought Israel into a visible church-state by the Sinai covenant; but that covenant did not last, Israel was put away. Here (in the text) he promises to bring them back by the new covenant, the gospel covenant from mount Zion,” &c. p. 7.

† Libel, art. 7. † 1b. art. 6.

nal covenant. Besides, it is contrary to express scripture, (Heb. viii. 9.) "I will make a new covenant, *not according to the* "covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I "took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of "Egypt."

3dly, They accuse me for affirming, that God, as Creator, gave the moral law to Adam, by writing it on his heart*; consequently their opinion is, that God did not give the moral law as Creator; or in other words, Adam knew nothing of the moral law till he knew Christ the Mediator. This is a great mistake, contrary to plain scripture, Gen. i. 27.

4thly, They affirm, That the Sinai covenant was not founded on temporal rewards and punishments†. This error is clearly confuted by the whole law of Moses, particularly by Lev. xxvi. throughout. Those surely are temporal blessings and curses; and those are expressly said to have been given as sanctions to "the laws, statutes, and judgments, which the "Lord made between him and the children of Israel; in mount "Sinai, by the hand of Moses." ver. 46.

5thly, They maintain, That unless a person be in Christ, and assisted by his grace, he cannot swear a national covenant‡. This gives God the lie; who tells us, that old Israel swore his covenant, and yet they were "rebellious in heart, unstedfast "and perfidious in his covenant;" so that he "swore in his "wrath, that they should never enter into his rest." It also contradicts all human history; which informs us, that in the last centuries men of the worst characters swore our national covenants.

6thly, They affirm, That the children of Israel had a right to the land of Canaan, although they had never observed one article of the Sinai covenant||. Here "they err, not knowing the scriptures;" which assure us, that because they broke the covenant of God, therefore he made them all fall in the wilderness, save Caleb and Joshua, who "followed the Lord "fully." Heb. iv. 16.—19.

I may add to all, That the scope and tendency of their general plan of preaching is most dangerous,—tending to inspire the hearers with bad sentiments. As they are taught to consider themselves as *witnesses for Christ, an holy people separated by God's covenant from all people, &c.* and to look on others as *the carnal generation, sectarians, latitudinarians, &c.* such teaching must naturally beget pride, self-conceit, party-spirit, ill-nature, and a false security. And as human testimonies, covenants, acts of parliaments and of assemblies, are urged on

* Libel, art. 6. † *Ib.* art. 7. ‡ *Ib.* art. 9. || *Ib.* art. 10.

their consciences; such opinions must inspire slavery and blind obedience to men; and consequently must debauch the conscience from its allegiance to the King of Zion. I speak from experience. Such were the baneful effects of their doctrines and principles upon my own heart. But blessed be God, who opened mine eyes to see my Bible amidst all the above rubbish and trumpery, and who has not suffered me to preach the above opinions, even when I believed them, or at least had not seen their inconsistency with the gospel of Christ. May I be no more "exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers;" but may I count all things loss and dung, that I may gain Christ, and that "through faith and patience of the scriptures I may have hope."

I proceed, 3dly, to offer my objections against their discipline and government. They have always been famous for excommunication; yet seldom have they directed their anathemas by the divine rule. Their shafts have been aimed by humour and prejudice, on account of mere differences of opinion, chiefly about human things—Besides, they exclude by rules which Christ never appointed. Instead of applying to the Bible, where all the laws and rules of Christ's house are, they always appeal to the acts of parliaments, general assemblies, &c. These are considered as laws of Christ's authorising, and accordingly they are executed in his name, and by his authority; as if Christ had been so unfaithful in his house, that he left its government and laws to be coined and stamped by the authority of human legislators and fallible councils. If any of these acts are enacted in the word of God, they are sufficiently authorised already, and Christians feel themselves bound to obey: if any of them relate to the decency and order to be observed in the churches, we may chuse as many of them for prudential measures as we judge proper. But to consider them as binding the consciences of Christians because of the authority of parliaments and counells, is to maintain all the principles of "the man of sin." Christ has left no authority to fallible men to make any law, rule, or doctrine in his church; there is only an authority in every church to obey, or to put in execution, the laws which Christ has made, and published in the records of his kingdom.—Again, they maintain, That the reformation between the years 1638 and 1650 was complete; yet they have added to the laws then made at least several hundreds of acts of parliament and assembly made since the revolution; besides I know not how many Secession-acts. Now, how was the second reformation-period complete, while it wanted such a number of laws, necessary for the government of the church

of

of Christ? That no man can know by what rules he is to be judged: whether by those framed in the days of Mr Knox and James I.; or by such as retrieved their authority between the years 1638 and 1640; or by those which have been promulgated since the revolution; by the civil or state, or the Secession; or, finally, by some yet to be stamped by church-authority, that inexhaustible source of laws and doctrines. It is certainly very unsafe, in this case, for any man to subject himself to such judgment. Particularly, the common people must be mere slaves; as it is impossible they can have leisure to read, or judgment to understand all the acts of parliament, assembly, and Secession, enacted in the above periods; and consequently they cannot know whether the clergy judge right or wrong in any case which concerns them. But were they confined to their Bible, and a few stated prudential measures, then the people might know the rules of judgment as well as the clergy; as all the rules of Christ's church are plain, easy, and intelligible to every attentive reader.

Again, I consider their partiality in the exercise of discipline as highly blameable. If any of their people shall speak favourably of any who differ from them in sentiment, or begin to call in question any of their opinions, however absurd, they are immediately silenced, and suspected of heresy. In this case, if any misdeed, however trifling, can be charged against a man, he is instantly made an object of discipline, and is sure to be handled with the greatest severity. If he attempts to defend his cause by argument, however modestly he behaves, this aggravates the crime. What! say they, our principles are well known; they have stood their ground now these two hundred years, and we will not suffer them to be called in question.—If the offender does not immediately leave them, he is maltreated and abused in the most shameful manner. If he retires from their society, they immediately forge a thousand defamatory stories, with a view to wound, if not to ruin his reputation.—But, on the other hand, if any person vindicates all their *infringes*, and speaks “with reverence of the clergy’s faults,”—this covers a multitude of sins. Whatever crimes he should be guilty of, they are clandestinely construed into foibles and failings, which the best of men are liable to. Notwithstanding these, he is a good man at the bottom, and adheres steadfastly to the Lord’s cause.

But their stunning duplicity appears most obviously in the case of occasional hearing. If any of their party happens to hear a minister of another communion, this is considered as scandalous; although its degree in the list of offences seems as

yet undetermined *. This crime is generally laid in the balance against the purse of the delinquent. If the purse happens to be weighty, the offence diminishes in proportion, and ordinarily vanishes into "the small dust in the balance." In this case, the offender is dismissed with a recommendation not to do the like for the future, "unless he sees it to be his duty." But if the purse be light, the crime easily preponderates; and the delinquent must be censured accordingly, either with a severe rebuke, or, in case of obstinacy, with exclusion from the peculiar privileges of the church.—These instances of partiality have frequently given me the most sensible pain; yet I would not have mentioned them, had they not been too notorious to be denied.

I go on, *4thly*, to examine their terms of communion; than which nothing can be more unscriptural and absurd.—Christian communion is to be enjoyed on the terms of Christ's institution. Now, it is certain, that these terms are revealed in the word of Christ, and that nothing is stated nor allowed there as a term of communion, but a "professed subjection to the gospel of Christ," in faith and practice. But it is very evident, that Seceders reject these terms as insufficient, and avowedly admit none but such as agree with all the horrid principles and gross errors and heresies above specified.—Particularly, *1st*, All the members of their communion must believe, that it is sinful to hear the gospel from any person but a Seceder. *2dly*, They must profess the faith of a Christian in human traditions, or in a human testimony, grounded upon the traditions of the fathers. *3dly*, They must also believe in human covenants, and their religious obligation;—a term of communion unknown in Christianity, as the whole Christian system was finished near 1700 years ago, while this term of communion is not yet 200 years of age. *4thly*, It is required of them, that they believe it to be their duty, to extirpate Episcopacy and all sectaries by all civil pains; or to endeavour to induce the civil magistrate to bring them to condign punishment, according to the tenor and spirit of the acts passed by the privy council, parliament, and general assembly, in the covenanting periods. *5thly*, They must believe, that our British civil constitution is unlawful, because it is

* One of their clergy, however, determined its atrocity in the following manner. Reprimanding some of his hearers from the pulpit, for hearing, in his absence, the established clergyman of the parish, he was pleased to bestow upon their crime the odious epithet of *adultery*. Yea, says he, it is worse than if you had defiled your neighbour's bed; since this would only have been but *temporal* adultery, whereas the other is *spiritual*.

contrary

contrary to the laws framed in the last century, which, according to the Seceders, are still binding on all ranks in these lands. 6thly, All who differ from them in opinion, of whatever character and denomination, are excluded from their communion.

The above are terms agreed on by both parties of the Secession. But the Antiburghers have added some materials to this Babel-building. 1st, Their members must not only believe with the Burghers, that Christ took "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" from the general-assembly, and gave them to the Seceders; but they must believe also, that he took them from the Associate Synod, and entrusted them with the twelve ministers, who, under the banner of a protest, left that court sitting in Bristow meeting-house, and, by the direction of a beam of light from heaven, erected themselves into a new court in Mr Gib's house. 2dly, They must believe, that it is sinful to swear the burghers-oath; and that it is duty to deliver over to Satan, all who see not that oath to be sinful, although they should never swear it. 3dly, They exclude all who will not swear their bond, or at least all who do not see it warranted in the word of God, and are not ready to swear it at first opportunity. Such as only "lie open to light," are admitted with difficulty.

None of the above terms are so much as mentioned in the word of God, and consequently are sinful. The communion of Christ is the communion of the body of Christ, who are all partakers of *the one bread*, and admitted to that privilege on terms assigned by the Head of the body. But when any party makes such terms of religious communion, as exclude all the disciples of Christ, who cannot receive that privilege on sinful conditions, they undoubtedly make a schism in the body, and cut themselves off from the body, as they have no more communion with the whole body of Christ, than a withered arm which cannot admit nourishment from any other member of the natural body. It is evident, then, that the Seceders are guilty of schism; and accordingly ever since they excluded all other Christians from their communion, like an arm cut off, they have gradually lost the vigour and spirit of Christianity, and have fallen into decay and corruption. I know some among them still retain some faint ideas of Christian liberty, and excuse themselves for joining in their communion on sinful terms, by alleging that they do not agree with these terms, but disavow them in their hearts. This is the grossest hypocrisy, believing one thing and professing the contrary. By joining in the communion of a party, we say that we acquiesce in their terms of communion, and say it in the most solemn

manner over the body and blood of Jesus. Now, if we believe the contrary, the sinfulness of our conduct is inexcusable. By this rule we may join the Romish communion, or any other equally absurd. Sinful terms of communion are universally allowed to be the safest ground of separation from any church. Errors may be in a church; but while these are not imposed on its members, or a belief of them required as a qualification requisite to communion, the danger is not so great; but when the contrary is the case, we cannot communicate without sin.

5thly, I consider their spirit and temper as highly blameable, — being uncharitable, and contrary to the spirit of love. It would be an endless task to relate all the instances of their uncharitable temper. Whoever looks into the *Seceding* publications, must see them, generally speaking, filled with the most virulent abuse, and malevolent reflections poured upon the church established. Every mistake of conduct is magnified into a crime, and the errors of individuals are charged upon the whole body. All other parties are branded with terms of infamy, as *sectarians*, *latitudinarians*, *agents of Satan*, &c. Yea, they tear up the monuments of the sleeping dead, and pour ignominy upon many valuable ministers, and others, who lived at and before the revolution. Nor can the best ministers in this age escape their fury. — A recent instance of which I shall here relate. In October 1767, I attended a meeting of Presbytery, where the dissertation on the Sinai covenant, published by Dr John Erskine in Edinburgh, was declared erroneous, and the author an infidel. Says a minister, with whom the rest all agreed, *If Mr Erskine really believes what he has asserted in that dissertation, I am sure he cannot be a Christian!!!* Now, if in their judgment Dr Erskine is not a Christian, I cannot see how any in that church can be entitled to that character. — Nor are they more favourable to the ministers of *Relief*; but, merely because they contend for Christian liberty, and oppose tyranny over the faith and consciences of men, they take care to represent them as *latitudinarians*, *enemies to the Lord's cause*, &c. *who lead their people a smooth way to hell*. — Such a spirit as this must be an enemy to the gospel, and to that charity which thinketh no evil. It is not the spirit which is of God.

6thly, Nothing strikes me with greater horror, than the consideration of the perjury into which the clergy have involved such a multitude of unwary people. Thousands have sworn the bond, the party-test, who were incapable of understanding its import, either through youth or weakness.

Now,

Now, ignorant swearing is a kind of perjury; although no doubt it will be charged to the account of the administrators principally, who preached, prayed, and exhorted them into the crime. The case of the young and unthinking swearers must merit our pity, rather than excite indignation; when we consider how artfully their leaders seized upon their weak side, and wrought upon their hopes and fears, by presenting them with all that can encourage the one, or alarm the other. Swearers were favoured with the smiles of their minister, and buoyed up with the hopes of being favourites of heaven; while those who "feared an oath," were frightened with the view of excommunication, and threatened with all "the terrors of the Lord."—In that oath, too, people swear to adhere to books which Jesus never inspired, and to walk by rules which he never planned: and, what is worst of all, as the confession of sins is so intimately connected with the bond, people swear to the belief of lies and uncertainties. In that confession, there is a number of manifest falsehoods, as the Burgher-Seceders have evidently proved in their *Overture*, &c. Besides, it contains also a narration of supposed facts, many of which are said to have happened an hundred years ago, and so must be all dubious in law; *i. e.* no man can swear to the truth of them, as he was neither eye nor ear witness of them. Moreover, it represents the work at Cambuslang as a delusion, and Mr Whitefield as an impostor; although many of the swearers never saw the one or the other; and although they had been spectators, it is a question how far they were qualified to judge, or what call they have to swear in any such matters. It is hard enough, if we cannot get to heaven, unless we swear others into hell.

It has afforded me great satisfaction to think, that the Burgher-Seceders have seen the sinfulness of those things, and have at last put a stop to this torrent of perjury. But as many of themselves swore that oath, and had a vast influence in leading others to the snare, it could be wished that they had openly acknowledged their offences, and had more carefully warned others of their danger. Ready are they to confess and publish the sins of others, while this their own iniquity has never been made ground of mourning to this day.—As to the Antiburghers, they are so far from repenting of their wickedness, that "they refuse to be ashamed." Left their students, after they come to the years of reason and reflection, should begin to judge for themselves, and refuse to swear the covenant, their clergy oblige them to swear that bond before they can be admitted to the divinity-hall. This favours of the wisdom of this world,

Thus,

Thus, many at the age of sixteen, or a little above it, are unwarily induced by worldly motives, to swear to a religion, which they have never examined. And if afterwards any of them, by searching the scriptures, find that they have sworn to any unscriptural opinion, they are deterred from farther examination, when they are told, that "they have opened their mouth to the Lord, and they cannot go back, or make inquiry after vows;" as if an oath could bind us to adhere to any false opinion! I feel for the young men, knowing experimentally how easily unthinking youth may be misled. May "the Lord deliver them from the snare of the fowler!"

But "the leaders of this people cause them to err." This may pass for a little; but there is a last day! "The fire will try every man's work:" and the Judge has assured us, that "by his word we shall be judged at the last day." Then he will ask us teachers, whether we "taught all things whatsoever he commanded," and "added not to his word?" But where shall we find in that word, any command to swear human-religious covenants, standards, and testimonies; and to make this the bond of union among Christ's disciples? Can we say in that day, "Lord, thou commanded thine apostles to lay this burden on thy churches, and to bind them together by this band?" Far less can we find any excuse for imposing false oaths; since God has assured us, that "his curse shall enter into the house of him that sweareth falsely by his name." If we have preached our own covenants, more than God's; and urged a belief in our acts and testimonies, with greater warmth than the belief of the divine testimony; yea, if we have joined our own things, with the things of God; how shall we abide the day of his coming? May we never teach his little ones, "to break the least of his commandments," nor "add to his words; lest he reprove us, and it be sin in us!" His covenant abides for ever. Upon this foot may we and our hearers stand, that so "when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming!"

Lastly, The personal injuries I have received from both parties of Seceders, afford me sufficient reasons for declining their authority. The usage I got among the Antiburghers, has already been delineated at large; and I shall now proceed to represent the conduct of the Burghers towards me, in order that my separation from them may be farther vindicated. And as a full display of their procedure would be very little interesting to the public, I shall only give the following short account of it.

I had almost finished an account of the Associate Presbytery of Perth, &c. in my cause lately before them; but before I could publish it, a narrative of their conduct, written by one of their number, and connived at, if not assisted by the rest, made its appearance in print. I have waited long to see if the Presbytery would openly avow, what they have privately sent into the public; but I have waited in vain. I shall therefore proceed to correct their narrative where it is amiss, and supply it where it is wanting. This appears necessary to me, as no man can form any proper judgment of the case from the account already published.

The Narrative begins and ends with a terrible bustle about the *Essay on national covenanting*, clamouring against me, for adopting the sentiments of that essay, and refuting my principles with a great deal of labour. But as it has produced nothing new, but has only offered the old threadbare arguments which have been answered long ago again and again; I shall take no further notice of them. What I have published is truth: and neither the condemnation of the Essay, by a solemn sentence of Presbytery; nor the arguments of the Narrative, have raised in me the least alarm for its safety.—What the Narrative says on that head, is summed up in the libel; where the reader will find my answers at large,—and let every man judge for himself.

But the Narrative chiefly labours, in giving an account of the procedure of the Presbytery in leading a proof on the first article of libel, in which I am charged with asserting, “that the body of Christ was not made of the substance of the Virgin.”—Here I shall make the following remarks.

The Narrative fairly acknowledges, that I was attacked by the Presbytery on the principles of the *Essay on national covenanting*, before they once mentioned the charge of the first article; but it entirely misrepresents the manner in which that charge was introduced. It insinuates, that the Presbytery had never been informed of my teaching the above tenet, till their meeting March 10. 1767 *; and that they then were informed, that I had taught it of late. Yet the libel itself says, that it was taught near two years before that time; and it can be proved, that the Presbytery heard of it in a few weeks after the sermon libelled was preached. But as they knew well, that the persons who circulated the rumour, were prejudiced against me, they entirely disregarded it; nor would it have ever been mentioned had the Essay slept. The Essay, however, appeared; I am supposed to be the author, and so must be

* Narrative, &c. p. 6.

cahiered. preachings, prayers, sentences of Presbytery, writings, and printed publications, are employed to discover the heresy of that Essay, and to punish its author. But all failed; so strong is the truth. Many of the people, having still some Christianity and common sense left them, to the great grief of the clergy, would not be bullied into the belief of error in the Essay, nor join in the hue and cry raised against its supposed author. Hence arose the political necessity of reviving the above story of heresy. The clergy wisely foresaw, that it would not "answer the ends of edification," if they made my condemnation turn upon the Essay: and yet they had gone too far to draw back. In this strait, they remembered, that, about an year and an half ago, some of their people about Anchor-muchty had spread the above slander. This will do the business. We will dress him up in the skin of an old Manichee; and then bawl, *Heresy!* Not only our own people, but all parties will hate him, if we can get them to believe our assertions*. Thus, we shall glut our revenge upon that heretic, who will not pronounce the *Shibboleth* of our party clergy-covenants.—But what if he throw off the Manichee-skin, and appear in his native orthodoxy? We will possibly find some who will swear him into that error; and we will in the meantime talk, and preach, and pray him into it; and we are sure to be believed among the people. Yea, although he should openly and explicitly disavow that heresy, we will still charge it upon him, as we must know better what he believes than he does himself.

Upon these principles, the Presbytery proceeded. When I was asked, if I had taught that error, or if I believed it? I told them, that I had no such opinion; but that I utterly abhorred it. As they still urged the point, I took the Bible, the confession of faith and catechisms, and read my opinion from these books; and declared that this was my unfeigned sentiment. No, says the Presbytery, that is not your opinion. Well, then says I, you must prove that it is not. I have given you my belief on that head, in the most clear and explicit terms; terms of your own choosing; and if you will not take my word for my belief, I see no method left whereby I can satisfy you. But all would not do: still it must form a part of the libel; but how justly, I leave mankind to judge. According to this plan, I can easily maintain, that the Presbytery do not believe one word of the Bible; because although they say that they believe the whole, by their own rule, I must aver, that they

* Said a father "Ere we leave him, we will make him so black, that no party shall receive him."

believe

believe not a truth in it; but study to conceal their errors "under the thin mask of a declaration of adherence to the scriptures." I suppose the Presbytery would not chuse to be judged by their own rule.

But lest their plan should miscarry, after all, the Presbytery at this meeting practised every artifice to "entangle me in my talk." As various queries were put, I gave answers such as occurred in the extemporary way. In the mean time, the clerk pretended to write my answers, which were not so much as read to me that night. Next day, however, I heard them read; and was surprised to hear my answers disguised in such words, as made them convey ideas quite distinct from what I intended: and not only so, but they had answers marked which I never gave, and queries which were never asked.—Yet these frame so many articles of libel. This was such conduct as was never practised in any Protestant country: the annals of the inquisition can scarce produce a more glaring instance of tyranny.—They excuse themselves indeed, by telling me, that, as it was a judicial conversation, I might have "easily" learned, that they were to mark what might be said *. True, I might have learned as much of the Presbytery's disposition by that time; but, as I erred on the charitable side, I could scarce imagine that they would have been guilty of such iniquity, either in a judicial or extrajudicial conversation. They tell me next, that the queries "were not premeditated." But will this excuse wickedness, that it was not premeditated? Again, they allege, that it was not the Presbytery, "but a certain brother" who did the whole. But is not *the reset as ill as the thief*? Did not the Presbytery acquiesce in what he did? Yea, this is false, since they were read next day as a part of the minutes, and as a deed of the Presbytery, as their own minutes testify †.

Page 25. of the Narrative exhibits a cluster of lies. It is asserted, that I insisted that the libeller should prove that first article; whereas it is clear from my answers (p. 19.), that I demand no such thing. Again, it is alleged, that "I did not so much as pretend to offer any objection against one or other of the witnesses." This is false. When some of them were going to be examined, I told the Presbytery, that they knew as well as I, the disposition of those witnesses towards me, and what they had vented against me. I own, I ought to have been more explicit on that head; but the fact is, the Presbytery knew all my objections as well as I did. They knew, that it was entirely unprecedented and illegal, to make witnesses

* Narrative, p. 18. † Ib. p. 5. 6.

depose to a sermon they had heard near two years ago; that one of the witnesses was about 60 years of age, and so could not be supposed to remember a sermon, so as to depose to it at such a distance of time; and that another, worn out with the fatigues of the tavern through the week, generally sleeps them off on Sabbath, and so might be well supposed to have mistaken me. They knew, too, that the 2d, 3d, and 4th witnesses had displayed the greatest prejudice against me at my settlement in Abernethy; that after they heard the sermon libelled, they industriously circulated the clamour of heresy, but never once spoke to myself on that head; which was certainly acting an unchristian part. Again, twelvemonths after that, they came to Abernethy, and joined with me in communion; yea, some of them served under me in the character of elders on that occasion*. Now, I appeal to all mankind, if it can be credited, that those men really believed one word they have sworn. Could men so zealous for truth have joined in communion with a man, whom they really believed to be an heretic?—These things, well known to the Presbytery, entirely disqualified them from being witnesses against me, and must unquestionably discredit their testimony. I therefore desired the Presbytery not to take their depositions at all: but nothing would prevail.—Again, the Narrative asserts, that I never offered any exculpatory proof. This is obviously false. I asked liberty again and again in words, to bring in such proof; yea, it is clear from my answers, recorded page 19. of the Narrative, that I demanded it in writ. It is amazing, then, how this author can give himself the lie, and publish his own condemnation! I was roundly told by the moderator, that no such proof could be allowed; as, says the Narrative, “a negative cannot be proved in a case of this kind:” he might have added, in a case of no kind. But this was a weak argument. What I would have offered to prove, was not a negative, but that I, at the time libelled, maintained the reverse of the doctrine libelled; or that I then affirmed, “that the body of Christ is the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, made of a part of the virgin; and so bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.” This is my real sentiment upon the head of our Saviour’s conception.

It appears to me very hard, that a man should be cut off for an error, whereof he declares his abhorrence; and, I suppose, the Presbytery has the honour of being the first inventors of

* The number of my elders was insufficient for the service; for which reason some of the Auchtermuchty elders were employed. None of my hearers were ever called to witness against me.

this

this rule, since our fathers disavowed the authority of the man of sin. It would be ridiculous in a surgeon to cut off a limb, because it was once affected with a gangrene, while he pronounces it in the mean time whole and sound. Supposing I had once espoused the error libelled, (although it never was the case); yet, as I openly avowed the truth before the Presbytery, nothing could be more contrary to all rules human and divine, than to deal with me, as if I had obstinately persevered in error.

The insinuation made, p. 29. is absolutely false, and plainly calculated to serve a turn. The narrator is aware, that his proof is clearly contradictory, since the first witness contradicts the testimony of the other three witnesses on the sermon. To put a gloss upon this, he pretends, or would have the world believe, that the first witness heard me at a time different from the rest; whereas it can be easily proved, that all the witnesses heard me at the same time, and that their depositions refer to the same sermon. This is perfectly well known to all the witnesses, and to many others; yea, to at least some of the members of Presbytery themselves. How detestable, then, is the above insinuation! How feeble a cause, which needs such a support!

The character of the first witness renders it credible, that his deposition is nearest the truth; and as it contradicts the remaining three, this renders the proof contradictory, and consequently weak. Besides, the three last contradict each other, in several very material circumstances. The one affirms, that I said, that our Saviour's body was nourished in the womb as other children are; but according to the other, I asserted, that he was nourished there, as a child is on the breast: two opinions, which could be in no mind at the same time. The last evidently contradicts itself. For if I said, that the body of Christ was made in the manner represented in the first part of the deposition, how could I say, that this is a mystery, and will remain a mystery? If I called it a mystery, then I certainly considered it as dark to me: what I clearly know, is no mystery to me. True, I did call the incarnation of Christ a mystery, and I call it so still. The terms of art, invented by divines, to unravel that mysterious process of divine agency, only betrays human pride, and a desire to be wise above what is written.—Thus nothing appears in these oaths but contradictions and inconsistencies.

But, upon a more narrow inspection of these depositions, it will be found, that none of them will *bear faith*. According to an act of parliament, every oath must be clearly affirmative

or negative, otherwise it claims no faith. Clauses of exception, such as *If I remember right, &c.* entirely invalidate the oath. But each of the oaths under examination contain such clauses of exception, and none of them are clearly affirmative.—Again, none of the deponents affirm, that I uttered the words deposed; how can I then be charged with them? They say indeed, that I uttered words to that purpose: but let them tell what these words were, and others will judge whether they were to that purpose or not. And although I had spoke those words, this does not say that I gave my own opinion in them, but the opinion of others. This was the real case, and I am sorry that the poor men had not so much judgment as to know this. I impute their mistake to their want of judgment, as I would fondly avoid ascribing it to their wickedness.

The 5th witness deposes to a private conversation, which he has grossly misrepresented, as can be attested by a person of integrity who was present. I pity the poor man, and wish him repentance and the remission of sins; lest he be found guilty, when he stands before the tribunal of unerring decisions.

The two last depositions refer to a private conversation said to be held in Perth. These were sustained for a proof, although neither of them charge me with asserting any thing wrong. The witnesses could not be induced to swear a lie, even when it was forged by the Presbytery.—Nothing could be more odious than the manner of introducing that branch of the first article of libel, upon which they depose. The Presbytery desired me to wait a little, after their meeting was dissolved, as they wanted to speak with me in private. Trusting to their fidelity, I remained, not suspecting but the conversation was to be friendly and private, as they said. However, that I might not escape, three men, not members of Presbytery, are kept within doors, that they might witness against me, if the Presbytery could extort any words from me, which could possibly be explained in a bad sense. Accordingly, when the libel appeared five months after, the first article charges me with asserting error in that conversation. This greatly surprised me, as none of the members of Presbytery had ever so much as hinted to me their offence on that head.—What the Presbytery have asserted on that article, is the grossest falsehood.—I am absolutely certain I said no such thing. How wicked was it to endeavour to make a man his own accuser! But “God takes the wise in their own craftiness,” and “brings to nought the counsel of Abithophel.”

The next falsehood appears in page 32. There it is asserted, That when the Presbytery at Kirkaldy inquired if I had any thing

thing further to add, as answers to the libel, &c. " I answered in the negative." This is false. I replied to the above question, that " as to the first article, I had read my mind on that head before the Presbytery long ago from the confession of faith and catechisms, where my opinion on that point is most clearly expressed ;—to which opinion I still adhere, and, I hope, ever will. As to the rest of the articles, I have nothing to add to the answers already given." That these were my words, can be proved by witnesses ; and not only so, but the minute of that Presbytery, an extracted copy of which I have by me, materially acknowledges the truth of what I have said.

Page 33. alleges, that " even before the Presbytery came to pass any sentence at all against, or for me, I rudely forced myself in, contrary to all decency and order, and at an improper season offered a protest." Hard words indeed ! How could I *rudely force myself* in, when I was not out ? I sat, the whole time of the deliberations on the question, on the same bench with my judges, not a yard distant from the clerk, and so could not get in without force. Again, the Presbytery had sustained the first article proved, the relevancy of which had been formerly sustained.—Was not this a deed against me ? It was against this deed I protested, and appealed to the Synod, after I had asked the moderator, whether the vote had not carried *prove* ? Was this " at an improper season ?"

The same spirit breathes in page 34. Says it, " I never applied for any extract of my protest, nor offered one reason to support it." This is evidently false : I actually got an extract ; and how could I have got it unasked ? I asked it in the conclusion of the protest itself, as page 33. of the Narrative declares. Satan generally betrays himself where-ever he is.—Yea, I asked it the same night three several times, as also an extract of the depositions of the witnesses ; but both were refused. They told me, they would take no notice of my appeal, but would proceed as if no such appeal had been made. Accordingly I got no extract, till the second day of the meeting of Synod ; to which I appealed, when I only received an extract of my protest, but none of the depositions as demanded. Hence it is easy to see how I could not give in reasons of appeal in form, as it behoved them to be founded on the depositions of the witnesses, a copy of which I was denied. This informality then was the necessary result of the injustice of the Presbytery.

From the above detail, it is easy to see, why I refused to join the Presbytery in prayer for a blessing on the sentence of suspension.

suspension. Could any person rationally join in praying for a blessing on a sentence he was convinced in his conscience was absolutely irregular and groundless? A sentence passed after an appeal made to the Synod, and in itself the fruit of malice and rage? Would the Presbytery have had me to mock God?—Well may the Narrative say, that the Presbytery feared lest the intimation of such a sentence in my meeting-house “would have been attended with a profanation of the Sabbath,” since the sentence itself was profane. I wish they had been as much afraid of profaning the name of God, by assuming his authority to do evil, or to pass unjust sentences in his name!

As the Narrative began, so it ends. Page 35. asserts, “The Synod met at Edinburgh (August 25.) where he (I myself) brought in a complaint against the Presbytery, contrary to all form, and on that ground was by the Synod laid aside,” &c.—The complaint mentioned was unanimously transmitted to the Synod by the committee, and not one member of Synod objected to its irregularity but one. As a proof of this, it was left upon the table till next meeting, where it still lies; which could not possibly be the case, had it been laid aside, as the Narrative says. The truth is, the Synod could not enter on the cause at that meeting, as all the members of Presbytery, the moderator excepted, were fled, and had carried their minutes along with them: as both parties were not present, the Synod could not judge; although, to do them justice, they all seemed to condemn the Presbytery.

The Narrative says (p. 36.) “Soft means were used for his recovery, but to no purpose.” I wish these terms were explained.—How could I be *recovered* from an error into which I never fell? And if by *soft means* be meant *private means*, none such were ever used. No committee was ever appointed to converse with me; although, a long time after the above sentence was passed, I was told, that if I would desire a committee, it would be granted. This I could not do, as this would have said that I had some recantation to make, while I had none. Besides, if they reckoned me in an error, it was their business to use means to reclaim me, as is usual in all courts of that kind.

The above sentence of suspension was intimated to me at Dundee, (October 1767); upon which I protested against it, and appealed to the Synod. At Perth, (December said year), the Presbytery agreed to sustain the remaining articles of libel, separately from the first, relevant to infer censure. This being intimated to me by the moderator, I also protested against it, and appealed to the Synod. For both these appeals, I gave in my reasons to the Presbytery in due time.

From

From the Presbytery the whole affair went to the Synod, by the way of appeal. There the whole process was read, with my protests, and reasons of appeal, from three different branches of the procedure of the Presbytery. The whole, however, was rejected, upon a pretended informality in the appeal; and I, in consequence, was remitted back to the Presbytery. Hereupon, I told the Synod, that I could not acquiesce in their present decision, for the following reason:—I cannot in conscience submit myself any longer to the judgment of the Presbytery of Perth, &c. as I have brought in very heavy charges against them in my reasons of appeal, which this Synod seem disposed to take no notice of. I am ready still to lay before you far more grievous charges against them, if I be allowed an extract of their answers to my reasons of appeal, which have been just now read. From these I offer to instruct, That the Presbytery are men guilty of the grossest dissimulation, and that in that paper they have asserted the most notorious falsehoods. This being the case, I cannot, consistently either with Christianity or common sense, submit my cause to the decision of such men, until I shall be convinced that my present opinion of them is groundless.—This representation had no effect, but still I must return to be judged by the Presbytery.

I once offered a protest against the above decision; but, at the desire of the Synod, I took it back, in order that I might ponder the matter more deliberately. Accordingly, when I returned from Glasgow, after the most serious consideration, I found myself possessed of the same opinion, with regard to the Presbytery, as represented above, and consequently could not reasonably submit to them as a Presbytery. I also saw reason to blame the Synod, not only for the reasons above mentioned, but because they alleged that my appeals were informal, and made this the only ground of their decision. I do not chuse to dispute upon forms not appointed in the word of God; but this I am sure of, that I can vindicate my appeals from the authenticated formulas of the church of Scotland, which admits of an appeal from any deed or sentence of an inferior court, whereby the pannel judges himself lesed; which appeal stops all further procedure in that affair, till the superior court gives its judgment.—But even allowing that there was an informality in the appeal, I look on it as very hard for a man to have his whole cause rejected merely on that account, and to have his character left under a blot among the people he is in communion with, without any probable hope of redress. This may obtain in civil courts, where a man can
only

only be hurt in his worldly interests. But sure Jesus never acted such a part; nor has he given any injunction to others to make the religious character of his subjects depend upon so slender a thread, as that of a mere form.

Nothing could be more artful and unjust than the conduct of the Synod in this affair. In judging concerning the last protest and appeal, they rejected it, on the pretence, that it was not made immediately after the deed appealed from was done. Upon this I desired them to read the minute of Presbytery relative to that matter, which would show whether their judgment was properly founded. On reading the minutes, it appeared, that the Presbytery alleged, that said deed was done before. Then I desired them to shew *when* and *where* it was done. This the Presbytery could not do, as no account of any such deed is to be found in their minutes, previous to that meeting, when the protest was taken. Thus my appeal was perfectly in form, according to the records of the Presbytery, to which I referred for my vindication. How absurd then was the charge of informality!—Although the Presbytery said so, yet their own minute gave them the lie. Yea, I can easily prove, that some members of Presbytery declared their satisfaction with that appeal, because it was made from a deed immediately done. How wicked then was it to insert a known falsehood into their minutes, and to make one part of them contradict the other?

After the Synod had rejected the whole cause, I was told, that, if I saw proper, I might bring in a libel against the Presbytery, on the various articles of charge laid against them in my reasons of appeal. This was obviously a mere shift. I offered to libel the Presbytery for the most scandalous iniquities, on condition that the Synod would grant me a copy of the Presbytery's answers to my reasons of appeal: but this was absolutely denied me.—I might indeed have framed a libel without the above paper: but as many of its articles would have required witnesses for proof, and these could not have been obtained but at great expence, as probably they must have gone to Glasgow; and, perhaps, after all, at such a distance of time, they might have forgot several of the facts libelled; I reckoned it vain to make any attempt of this kind. Moreover, although I had brought the clearest evidence, it is probable it would have been rejected, as the judges were obviously biased in favour of the Presbytery. This appears evidently from the above narration. If they had desired to detect the injustice of the Presbytery, would they not have granted me a copy of that paper, upon which I offered three several times

to prove the Presbytery liars and dissemblers? Again, one of the members of Synod acknowledged honestly, that the Presbytery had sent him a narrative of their conduct in my case, which was *very different* from the account given in their own extracted minutes, a copy of which I laid before the Synod. This he repeated thrice. Did not this prove the grossest dissimulation and artifice in the Presbytery, and also the most glaring partiality in the Synod, who would not inquire into the truth of this father's allegation?

At this meeting of Synod, a petition from my congregation, directed to the Synod, was read in the committee, and entirely neglected. As it shows how easily I could have produced exculpatory proof, had I been allowed, I shall present the public with a copy of it.—It was unsolicited, yea unseen by me, till a very few days before it was presented to the committee in the form in which it now appears.

To the Very Rev. the Moderator and remanent members of the Associate Synod, to meet at Glasgow, 3d day of May 1768.

The petition and representation of the elders and others, members of the Associate Congregation of Abernethy,

Humbly sheweth,

That since an appeal comes before the Synod, at this meeting, relative to a sentence of suspension passed against the Rev. Mr Alexander Pirie, our minister, by the Presbytery of Perth and Dunfermline; we beg leave to represent, that the above sentence appears to us to be unjust and unprecedented; since we could, if it were necessary, give an account of the particular doctrines our minister has taught us, both before and since he was settled amongst us; but we shall mention only the first and second after his settlement. The first was from that text, "God forbid that I should glory (in any thing) save in the cross of Christ." In discoursing on this subject, he shewed the ground of glorying to lie in the death of Christ, God-man, who was the seed of the woman, and as man made of her substance. The second text he preached from was, "There is one God, and one Mediator betwixt God and men, the man Christ Jesus." In preaching upon this, he proved the doctrine of the Trinity, and the divinity of Christ's pre-existent state before he was man; and then how he was very man, made of a woman, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Our minister, in autumn 1765, preached upon the subject libelled, also from that text,

"God

" God sent forth his Son, made of a woman ;" when there happened to be hearing him sundry people, from different corners of the country, and particularly severals from Auchtermuchty ; some of whom were notour and avowed opposers of our minister's being settled amongst us, unless there were such limits and boundaries fixed and settled upon, as would in effect render us no meeting almost worth noticing. Our minister, in discoursing from said text, made mention of two opinions, relative to the incarnation of our blessed Lord, as is shewn by the first witness led against him ; when, as at all times formerly, so particularly then, he established and confirmed the doctrine of Christ's human body, to be the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Messias promised to the fathers, conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, by the miraculous agency of the Holy Ghost ; and exhorted us, notwithstanding Christ's being made of a woman, not to entertain any opinion which might infer that our Saviour's body was unholy, as he was that holy thing born of a woman, yet separated from sinners. However, there were some of the hearers on that Sabbath-day, who, thinking one of the said opinions to be very new ; and, as it would seem, remembering that only, caused inform certain of the ministers of the Presbytery, in order to accuse our minister of error ; but to no purpose, as it was not credited by them, that he gave the same as his own opinion. Yet, by degrees, the story took air, and the Antiburghers blazed it abroad, that our minister was erroneous. And, as it was really false, so his Rev. brethren took not the least notice thereof, but assisted him, at two different times, in dispensing amongst us the sacrament of the Lord's supper ; at the first of which occasions, which was in July 1766, the now libeller Peter Speedy joined with us, who, together with some in his neighbourhood, inquired of us anent the foresaid point of doctrine, which made such a noise amongst the Antiburghers : and being assured by us of the groundlessness of the clamour, they declared they would not hereafter give the least credit to that story. At the second of these solemn occasions, which was in autumn thereafter, an elder from Auchtermuchty joined with us in that holy ordinance ; and also assisted our elders in the service of the tables, as an evidence of his being satisfied fully as to our minister's orthodoxy ; but no sooner was our minister suspected of being author of the essay on national covenanting, than he appeared his bitter enemy, and is one of the witnesses led against him ; and, as would seem, remembered nothing of the sermon quarrelled but the opinion formerly alluded to.

Further,

Further, we must, at least, beg to be excused for not acquiescing in the foresaid sentence of the Presbytery against our minister: since, at the meeting of Presbytery, March 10. 1767, before ever the libel appeared, many of us heard him read his opinion on the incarnation of our Saviour, from the sacred records, and in the precise words of the confession of faith and catechisms, both larger and shorter, which he declared to be his sentiments on that point; which, in our humble opinion, we gladly hoped, would have effectually put an entire stop to any process in that affair. But since it had not the just and desired success; and as it is said by some, our minister should have objected against the witnesses, yet we have no reason to complain of him thereanent; as he had personal acquaintance almost with none, at least a very few of them; and there's no discovering the heart, but by the words and actions.—Neither can we blame him for not objecting against the proof, on account of the distance of the time, in regard the Presbytery so very fondly received the libel against him, and so readily sustained themselves judges therein. Whereas, we humbly think, their province was to have rejected that article, both by reason of the length of time, and our minister having declared his orthodoxy on that subject formerly in their hearing, and, as we think, to their satisfaction too, as it was in their own precise words. He, our minister, also demanded of the Presbytery, the liberty of an exculpatory proof, which was refused him; upon which we think it was vain for him to object against any of their proceedings in which he was concerned. In short, all of us can declare, that our minister preaches the very reverse of the doctrine libelled, and never in our hearing advanced any such points of doctrine as he is accused of. We judge it therefore only justice done his character, to declare before this Rev. court, that it gives us sincere grief and pain to understand, that he is suspended for advancing and maintaining an error, which, we are very sure, he abhors and detests; and that such violent attempts should be made to deprive us of his labours, which have been faithful and constant, and we hope not unsuccessful amongst us.—We are very far from pretending to dictate to this Rev. court, having only with truth and simplicity represented the reasons why we cannot acquiesce in the sentence of the Presbytery; and do therefore earnestly beg and humbly hope, that the Rev. Synod would take the above into their serious consideration, and be pleased to reverse the sentence of suspension against our minister, which has done so much hurt to the interest of real religion and godliness in the place and country-side.

That the Lord may direct you in this, and every other affair that comes before you, is the prayer of

Your humble petitioner,
John Dron, *Abernethy*, April 27. 1768.

The congregation being met, and having chosen a preses, the above petition and representation was by them conceived and agreed upon, after reading the same; and they appointed it to be presented to the Rev. Synod, by their commissioner John Dron: and that he should insist, with all earnestness and humility, the same should be read and considered by them.

(Signed) JAMES ISAAC, *Preses*.

I shall say no more concerning the conduct of the Synod. Their procedure can be vindicated upon the maxims of worldly wisdom. "The Lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely," according to the maxims of this world, it was wiser for the Synod to "make to themselves friends" of the Presbytery, than of one man, although it should be by the judgment of unrighteousness. Besides, I revere several characters in the Synod; and although in these very characters I saw very considerable blunders, I chuse to pass them over in silence. With great satisfaction I have heard some of them preach the purity of the gospel; and I sincerely wish that I had not seen any part of their conduct so inconsistent with their doctrine. But where we have any room for charity, let us indulge it: we all, the wisest of us, err.

After I returned from Glasgow, I took a serious review of the whole affair. Examining the character of the Presbytery, as I had described it before the Synod, I was more and more convinced that I had done it no more but justice. In this view, it is easy to see, that I could not stand connected any longer with men, of whom I had conceived such an unfavourable opinion. As the Synod, too, seemed nowise disposed to redress my grievances, I judged it vain, yea irrational, to pursue the matter any further. But before I gave in a declination to the Presbytery, I began to examine more narrowly the Seceding publications, that I might see whether or not they were really witnessing for the truth of the gospel, according to their pretensions. Of this I had formerly doubted; but now I saw it evident, that their pretensions were entirely groundless. To me it appeared, that their distinguishing principles were not "the principles of the oracles of God." This determined me at once to leave that party, since I judged them as neither speaking nor acting "according to the truth of the gospel."

Accordingly

Accordingly I gave in to the Presbytery, a paper declaring my reasons of declinature in brief; which reasons are exhibited more at large in the preceding pages.

Nor have I myself been blameless. I ought to have examined the Burgher principles more strictly, before I joined them. If I had done so, I might have easily seen the inconsistency of adhering to a testimony, wherein we find falsehoods; of calling any practice a duty, which we neither do ourselves, nor will allow others to do; and of squabbling about a moral duty, which may not be duty once in 70, 700, yea, in 7000 years, or to eternity. Again, I erred, at the commencement of this prosecution, in indulging too favourable opinions of the Presbytery. This threw me off my guard, and kept me from using the precautions necessary for escaping the snares, whereby they lay in wait to deceive me. Moreover, I ought to have left them, so soon as I saw that our opinions were so different; and not have wasted so much time and money in a fruitless attendance on a pretended court, where every new appearance gave the members only a fresh opportunity of bringing guilt on their own heads, and of reviling and abusing me in the most outrageous manner, while I had no access to make my defence *.

I am not, however, to blame, as the *Narrative* alleges, in giving a disingenuous answer to the query concerning the binding obligation of the covenants, put to me at my admission into that party. Before I was admitted at all, I told the then moderator of Presbytery, that I could not bow to that query, unless the sense of it be this;—So far as the *matter* of these covenants was moral, it is binding on all posterity. To this he replied, “Many of us take up that question in the same

* I shall only relate one instance of many, which might be adduced in proof of what I have asserted.—I attended a meeting of Presbytery at Kinross, in February 1767, where the affair was called in, and examined. In the course of reasoning, or rather of speaking against reason, some members took occasion to attack me, with all the virulence which an envenomed heart could suggest. One in particular, a son of the famous *Dumas*, spread his invectives and slanders around a very large audience, for near an hour together.—I heard all to *Amen*; and then desired leave to speak in my own vindication. This was absolutely refused, with a loud voice, for this weighty reason;—“No, Moderator, he is a pannel; he ought not to get leave to speak here!” He might have added, “We have endeavoured, Moderator, to render him odious before this crowded audience by his lies and nonsense; and doubtless, our eloquence has made some impression: now, Sir, if we permit him to answer for himself, he will very readily expose our falsity and hypocrisy, which would mar the whole plot.”

“light.”

"light." Well, says I, remember, I can take it in no other sense; and if any of your brethren have any other view of it, you may let them know. No objections were then made, so far as I know. —The reader may now judge whether there be any foundation for the terrible charge of disingenuity, laid against me on that head.

It would be endless to relate the numberless instances of maltreatment I have received from the Presbytery these two years past. In public and private, they have used incessant efforts to destroy one weak man, who has "no help of man at all." By solemn lies both to God and man; by circulating infamy both in their own flocks and mine; by every low, not to say wicked, method, have they studied to render me an object of abhorrence to mankind. But "I know in whom I have believed." That arm which supports the universe, is certainly able to support me. Here, through grace, will I rely, and let mine enemies spend their rage in vain. "Thou, O Lord, art a refuge to all that put their trust in thee! Let none that fear thee, ever be ashamed for my sake, O let the malice of the wicked end! Bless them who persecute me, and do good to them who spitefully use me and treat me!"

What I have written is sincerely intended for the good of Seceders. My well-meant efforts, for the edification of the people of that persuasion, have exposed me to the resentment of their clergy, whose honour and interest lay in the scale opposite to truth. The people, too, ever too much in subjection to clerical influence, have considered me as their enemy. But, my brethren, let me tell you your mistake. I have been anathematized for your sake again and again; and I am ready to be anathematized, or to be reckoned by you "accursed from Christ" again still, if this could tend to your edification; if it would tend to persuade you, that "you worship God in vain, while you believe for doctrine the commandments of men;" and that the remnant of the woman's seed are such as "keep the commands of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus Christ;" and not those "who are exceedingly zealous for the traditions of their fathers." This has been the aim of my writings and preachings among you; this shall be the scope of my prayers for you, now when I am banished from your society. I will repay love for hatred: curse me, and I will bless through grace. —Finally, brethren, farewell. Whether you will hear me or not, the death-bed will scatter that mist of prejudice,

prejudice, which now surrounds you; and will preach, that Bible-religion can only stand before God:—and I heartily wish, that this truth may not be believed too late!

Perhaps you imagine, that however I may be concerned for your welfare, yet my wishes for the happiness of your pastors are not so warm. But in this you are also mistaken. To see them teaching the things which become sound doctrine, and conducting you in the path of truth, would afford me the most sincere pleasure. Would they hear one, whom they have cast out, and prosecuted with so much virulence, he would address them in the following terms,

Brothren in the Ministry,

The pastoral care is of all others the most important, arduous, and interesting. It is the care of souls, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and destined for the eternal world. These are committed to our trust, that we may feed, help, assist, and direct them in the paths of righteousness. The great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls stands at the door, and will call us to an account: and blessed is that servant, who shall be found watching when his Lord comes! Alarming thought! Was religion a chimera; was death the end of existence, and no judgment to come;—then we might frame and support such a system of religion, as would best subserve our interest and aggrandizement in this world. But the Lord comes, and the blood of souls will be required at the hands of the faithless watchmen. Since we look for such things, how diligent should we be to fulfil our ministry, and to act as those who are really looking for the coming of the day of the Lord!

Now, if we really believe that we must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, we will certainly make it the business of life, to do the things which he says. What says he to us?

“Feed the church of God, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. You shall not add thereto, nor cease to declare the whole counsel of God.”

This is the food of souls: they are to be nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine. But, my brethren, do you not too, too often mingle your sermons with doctrines which Christ never taught? Are not human covenants, mens testimonies, the acts and deeds of fallible fathers, and things received by tradition from the elders, the frequent theme of your discourse? Do you not teach the people to give a divine faith to these things? Do you never wrest the scriptures, to establish these tenets? Did you really believe these things yourselves, or do you preach them, that you may get to yourselves.

a name?—The Judge hears you, and he will say, Who has required these things at your hands? Again, are not your sermons interspersed with the most unchristian reflections on all who differ from you in opinion, tending to fill your hearers with the spirit of malevolence? yea, do not your prayers breathe the same uncharitable spirit? The archangel, when contending with the devil, durst not bring a railing accusation against him before the Lord. And shall we worms use a freedom with our Maker, which was refused to archangels? When they are not permitted to rail against Satan before God, shall we presume to accuse our fellow-Christians before him?—To such assemblies mine honour be thou not united!—Is this the sincere milk of the word, whereby Christians are to grow in faith, love, and holiness? God forbid, that we should make any thing known among our people, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified! Shall we preach ourselves, or the necessity of covenants and bands of our framing, in order to knit the body of Christ together? No: the body of Christ is “knit together in love;” and its bands are bands of love, which have the strength of God. “With loving-kindness,” says God, “have I drawn you.” If we preach any thing else, how shall we abide the day of his coming?

Our fasting too will be recognized at that day. Did you fast at all to me? saith the Lord. Did you not fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness? Were you as careful to set their own sins before your people, and to lament over them, as you were eager to publish the iniquities of others? Did your fasting, like charity, begin at home? Rather, did you not magnify the guilt of others, and exaggerate their failings, while you soothed your hearers, with the flattering titles of the Lord’s remnant, witnesses for Christ, &c.? Minding the mote in your brother’s eye, you forgot the beam in your own, and deluded your people into a false security, while, heedless of their own state, they were constantly talking over the defections of the times. Is this the fast that I have chosen?

Nor shall your courts, brethren, be exempted from a review. How have you demeaned yourselves there? Have you acted as under the eye of the Supreme Judge? What then mean your hot contentions, vain janglings, angry disputes about doubtful matters, your anathemas so liberally thrown at one another about burgess-oaths, acts of parliament, and things which have no connection with godliness? Were you never afraid to gratify your own humours, and pass your sentences in the name of Jesus? Are you sure that Christ has committed the

the keys of his kingdom to you; and to none else; and that he has given you authority to make new laws, acts, covenants, and testimonies, binding the consciences of his subjects? Have you never executed your own laws, under the pretence of divine authority; and have not interest, honour, and even personal pique, directed your measures in dealing with offending brethren; more than the glory of God, or the salvation of souls? Will the sacred name of Jesus, prefixed to your railings and censures, sanctify measures which he never planned?—I beseech you remember that awful word, “Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, we prophesied in thy name, &c.” to whom he will say, “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.”

And are you really certain, that your terms of communion will stand the test at the bar of Jesus? The divine word is the rule whereby we are to be judged at the last day. Are your peculiar terms prescribed in that word; or rather, are they not merely of human device? Consider and see. Is it a light matter to exclude from the table of the Lord, all who bear not our image, or cannot put on our party-peculiarities, and give a divine faith to human histories? Will the Judge of all the earth proceed by these rules, and debar from the kingdom of heaven, all who walk not according to your dictates? No; certainly. Tremble, then, to curse in the name of Jesus, those whom he has blessed.

I would beseech you, too, to bring your spirit and temper under review. Have you not zealously affected your hearers, but not well? Can you justify the usage you have given to your fellow-labourers in the ministry; and are you certain they deserve all the harsh epithets, you have so lavishly bestowed upon them? Is the circle of the Secession, the boundary of the Spirit of God; and can none preach Jesus in sincerity but he who preaches your testimony, and joins you in railing against your fellow-Christians? What if your Master shall come, and find you *beating your fellow-servants*, instead of performing with assiduity the task assigned you, and provoking your brethren to love, and to good works? I tremble at the consequence.—“The Lord will cut that servant off from his family, and appoint him a portion with hypocrites.” Consider, then, what you do. The spirit which breathes in your preaching and conduct, will live in your hearers, when you are gone to your “long home.” Would you be so cruel, then, as to desire that they too should be found employed at the beating-work, when the Master comes? Will not this ag-

graveate your guilt, and add new burrows to the pit itself. If you would save yourselves, and them that hear you, consider these things seriously. Be not ashamed to relinquish what is wrong; nor be offended at one, who admonishes you in love. Hold fast the faithful word, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; and study to be as he was in the world. And if you "walk according to this rule," my constant, my dying wish shall be, "peace be upon you, and upon all the Israel of God."



THE END

